



Learn English Through Stories

T Series

Upper - Intermediate

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Banta Learning Present Tenses 4 by K S Sandhu

A House-Sitter's Dilemma

Sarah is a 58-year-old retired teacher who lives in a quiet village with her husband, Tom. They occasionally feel bored during the long winter months, even though they spend time gardening and visit their grandchildren now and again. Sarah enjoys reading historical novels and believes that staying active keeps people healthy. That's why, for the last five years, she and Tom work as housesitters for HousesittersPro.

HousesittersPro is a reliable company that helps people feel safe when they go on holiday. Their employees – mostly retired and trustworthy people with a clean background – move into clients' homes, look after the property, water plants, and care for pets. The company checks everyone's history carefully, so owners don't have to worry.

Currently, Sarah and Tom are living in a modern apartment in the city centre. The young owners, Mia and Luca, are travelling around Asia for a month. Sarah and Tom are looking after their two lively cats and a small garden on the balcony. Every morning, Sarah feeds the cats and opens the curtains to let in the light. Tom waters the plants and checks that everything is secure.

Life here is very different from their peaceful cottage. The city noise is getting louder every day because of roadworks nearby. The builders are working right outside, so Mia and Luca's flat feels a bit like a building site at times. Sarah and Tom can't leave the house for more than two or three hours, as the rules say they must stay to keep the home safe. This is becoming quite exhausting, especially for Tom, who usually walks miles in the countryside.

One evening, while they are watching TV (something they rarely do at home), Sarah sighs. "Tom, these cats are miaowing constantly because they miss their owners. And the city air doesn't smell fresh like our garden. I love helping people, but I wonder if this is still right for us."

Tom nods. "I know what you mean. We are arguing more than usual lately because we're both tired. But the owners trust us completely – they sent a lovely message yesterday saying how grateful they are."

Sarah thinks for a moment. She feels torn. On one hand, she likes the adventure and the extra money helps them enjoy retirement. On the other hand, she misses their quiet life and worries that staying in strange homes is affecting their health. It's a real dilemma.

In the end, Sarah decides to talk to HousesittersPro. "We are enjoying the work," she explains, "but perhaps shorter stays would be better now." The company understands and promises to find them easier jobs in the future.

Sarah smiles at Tom. "Retirement is changing, isn't it? But we are learning to adapt."

Questions:

1. Where do Sarah and Tom usually live, and what do they do in their free time?
2. What kind of people does HousesittersPro usually employ, and why do clients feel safe?
3. What are Sarah and Tom doing at the moment, and why can't they leave the apartment for long periods?
4. Why are Sarah and Tom arguing more than usual lately?
5. What is Sarah's dilemma, and what does she finally decide to do?

Answers:

Answer 1: Sarah and Tom usually live in a quiet village / a peaceful cottage in the countryside. In their free time, they spend time gardening and occasionally visit their grandchildren.

Answer 2: HousesittersPro usually employs retired and trustworthy people with a clean background. Clients feel safe because the company checks everyone's history carefully / the employees are reliable and the house is looked after properly.









Answer 3: At the moment, Sarah and Tom are living in a modern apartment in the city centre and are looking after two lively cats and a small balcony garden. They can't leave the apartment for more than two or three hours because the rules say they must stay to keep the home safe.

Answer 4: Sarah and Tom are arguing more than usual lately because they are both tired / life in the noisy city is becoming exhausting and different from their normal peaceful routine.

Answer 5: Sarah's dilemma is that she likes helping people and the extra money, but she misses their quiet life and worries that staying in strange homes is affecting their health. In the end, she decides to talk to HousesittersPro and asks for shorter stays in the future.

29 Present simple or continuous?

1 Basic differences in use

PRESENT SIMPLE	PRESENT CONTINUOUS
<p>Permanent situations; things we do not expect to change:</p>  <p>Janice lives in London with her husband and children.</p>	<p>Temporary situations, for a limited period of time:</p>  <p>But Janice is staying in a hotel this weekend. Time expressions: <i>today, this week, at the moment</i></p>
<p>Regular actions, habits and routines:</p>  <p>Janice is a pilot. She flies all over the world.</p> <p>Time expressions: <i>usually, often, every day, once a month, at the weekend, most days</i></p>	<p>Actions that are happening at/around the time we are speaking:</p>  <p>Janice is flying to Sydney today.</p> <p>Time expressions: <i>(right) now, at the moment, today</i></p>
<p>Permanent situations; things we do not expect to change:</p>  <p>Pilots usually train for about two years to get their flying licence.</p>	<p>Something that is changing:</p>  <p>More and more women are training to become pilots these days.</p>
<p>To describe events in a book, play or film:</p>  <p>The story starts in Madrid. The main character lives there. One day, he goes out and ...</p>	<p>To describe what is happening in a photo or picture:</p>  <p>That's my niece in the photo. She's riding her brother's bike.</p>

2 Action verbs

Action verbs describe an action and can usually be used in both simple and continuous forms:

Janice **flies** around the world. She's **flying** to Sydney today.

We usually **drive** to work, but at the moment we **aren't driving** because the car has broken down.

3 State verbs

State verbs describe states rather than actions, e.g. ways of thinking or feeling. These verbs are not usually used in the continuous form:

- ✓ I **prefer** classical music to popular music.
- ✗ I'm ~~preferring~~ classical music to popular music.
- ✓ Do you **understand** the maths homework now?
- ✗ Are you ~~understanding~~ the maths homework now?

	STATE VERBS	EXAMPLES
verbs of feeling/ wanting	like love dislike hate prefer need want wish (BUT we often use enjoy in the continuous)	Does she like her present? I need a little more time. (Are you enjoying that book?)
verbs of thinking/ believing	believe doubt forget know mean realise recognise remember think understand	I don't believe in luck. Do you know the answer? We think she's really nice.
verbs of being/ appearing	appear be seem	This door appears to be locked. Maria seems very helpful.
verbs of possessing/ relating	belong contain have (got) own possess	These drinks contain Vitamin C. Duncan has two Ferraris.
sense verbs	hear see smell taste	Listen! Do you hear music? This coffee tastes really good.

The verbs *agree*, *cost*, *promise* and *thank* are also rarely used in the continuous tense:
I **agree** with you. The hotel **costs** €100 a night.
We **promise** not to be late. He always **thanks** us with a card or flowers.

4 State verbs and the continuous form

We can use some state verbs in the continuous form, with a different and more active meaning:

	STATE (PRESENT SIMPLE)	ACTION (PRESENT CONTINUOUS)
have	I have two sisters. (= possess)	I'm having breakfast right now. (= eating)
think	What do you think of it? (= What's your opinion?)	What are you thinking about? (= considering at the moment)
appear	It appears that they're going to close the theatre. (= seems that/looks like)	The Gypsy Kings are appearing at the local theatre next week. (= performing)
taste	Your soup tastes wonderful! (= a quality of the soup)	I'm tasting the soup to check if it needs any more salt. (= I'm checking/testing it.)
see	Do you see the difference between the two pictures? (= can you notice it?)	Are you seeing your friends a lot at the moment? (= meeting regularly)

- We can also sometimes use state verbs in the continuous when we want to emphasise that the state is unusual or unexpected, and probably temporary:
My new car uses a lot of petrol so it's **costing** me a fortune.
(I don't usually spend this much on petrol.)
I'm **finding** it difficult to organise my time at the moment.
(This is unusual for me; I usually organise my time well.)
- Some verbs which express physical states (*feel*, *hurt*, *ache*) can be used in the simple or continuous forms with no (or very little) difference in meaning:
'How do you **feel/are you feeling** today?' 'I **feel/I'm feeling** a lot better, thanks.'
My back **aches/is aching** this morning.

FORMALITY CHECK It is becoming more common to use *like*, *love* and *hate* in the continuous form in informal English: 'How's the course going?' 'It's great! I'm really **loving** it!' Some people consider this to be incorrect.

Practice

1 Match the sentences 1–5 with the correct meaning, A or B.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>0 Craig works in an architect's office.</p> <p>1 Rhona is staying with her aunt this weekend.</p> <p>2 Max sings with a band on Friday evenings.</p> <p>3 Steve can't talk now. He's interviewing someone.</p> <p>4 More men are looking after their children these days.</p> <p>5 Berlin is one of Germany's sixteen states.</p> | <p>A This is a temporary position.
B This is his permanent job.</p> <p>A She usually lives somewhere else.
B This is her permanent home.</p> <p>A This is a changing situation.
B This is something he does regularly.</p> <p>A This is an action in progress.
B This is something he does regularly.</p> <p>A This is a permanent situation.
B This is a changing situation.</p> <p>A This is a fact – something permanent.
B This is a changing situation.</p> |
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2 **GRAMMAR IN USE** Read the information about HousesittersPro. Then complete John and Angela's statement with the verbs from the box.

are enjoying are living are looking after are spending
don't leave get go live spend visits work

HousesittersPro – the holiday solution

Going on holiday? Then you need HousesittersPro.



Our employees come and live in your home while you're away. They look after your property, including your garden and your pets, so that your home is safe. They are mostly retired people, and we have checked their background.

Meet John and Angela, two of our typical housesitters:

"We have both retired from responsible jobs. We (0) *live* in a small cottage in the country and we (1) our retirement. We (2) time in the garden most days and we often (3) to the cinema and theatre with our friends. Our daughter (4) us with our grandchildren now and again. But we sometimes (5) bored, so for three months every year we (6) for HousesittersPro.



Then our life is very different. At the moment, we're in the home of a young couple who are travelling for three weeks. We (7) in their apartment in the city, and we (8) their pets. We (9) a lot of time in front of the TV, because as HousesittersPro employees, we (10) the house for more than a couple of hours at a time. You know that your house is safe when you have HousesittersPro in it!"

3 Choose the correct words in *italics*. In one sentence, both answers are possible.

🔊 2.57 Listen and check.

- 0 Fatima's a really good friend. She never *(forgets)* *is forgetting* my birthday.
 1 Selina *doesn't work / isn't working* in her office at the moment because the builders are there.
 2 Mmm. Those roses *smell / are smelling* lovely. Are they from your garden?
 3 I can't believe how difficult my new course is. I *find / I'm finding* it really hard to keep up with all the reading at the moment.
 4 These are difficult times because food and fuel prices *go up / are going up* quickly.
 5 *Do you believe / Are you believing* anything that child says?
 6 Harry isn't at work because *he feels / he's feeling* unwell.
 7 In the film 'Australia' two young people *meet / are meeting* and become friends during World War II.
 8 Some of the students *don't understand / aren't understanding* basic mathematical ideas.

4 GRAMMAR IN USE Check the verbs in the list; write A for action, S for state or A/S for action/state. Then complete the conversation with the verbs in the present simple or present continuous. Use each verb once only. 🔊 2.58 Listen and check.

appear *A/S* be enjoy ~~feel~~
 go go well have know
 like see visit

JULIET I (0) *feel* exhausted after all that shopping!

KAREN So do I. I usually (1) a coffee after shopping. This café looks nice.

JULIET Mmm. I (2) (not often) shopping, but I really (3) it when I do!

KAREN Let's sit here. Show me your new dress again. That's really nice. (4) it for a special occasion?

JULIET No, I just need to cheer myself up!

KAREN Oh, why? Everything (5) with your job, isn't it?

JULIET Well, not really.

KAREN Why's that? You usually (6) to be so happy in your work.

JULIET Well, I was at first but as you know, I (7) my family in Scotland whenever I can, and these days, now that Dad's quite ill, I (8) them every weekend, so I'm leaving work early every Friday to get to Scotland. My boss (9) (not) that, although I work longer on other days, so we're always arguing at the moment.

KAREN That's a shame. What are you going to do?

JULIET Honestly, Karen, I (10) (not) I really like the job, but I need to be with my family at the moment, too.

5 Use the verbs in brackets to write about yourself. Choose the present simple or continuous.

- 0 (live) *I live with my parents but I'm planning to move into a flat with friends soon.*
 1 (live)
 2 (work/study)
 3 (enjoy)
 4 (believe)

Answers

UNIT 29

1 1 A 2 B 3 A 4 B 5 A

2 1 are enjoying 2 spend 3 go 4 visits
5 get 6 work 7 are living 8 are looking after
9 are spending 10 don't leave

3 1 isn't working 2 smell 3 I'm finding 4 are
going up 5 Do you believe 6 he feels/he's
feeling 7 meet 8 don't understand

4 appear A/S, be S, enjoy S, feel S, go A, go well A,
have A/S, know S, like S, see A/S, visit A
1 have 2 don't often go 3 enjoy 4 Is
5 is going well 6 appear 7 visit/see
8 am seeing/am visiting 9 doesn't like
10 don't know

5 Model answers

- 1 *I live in a house with my family.*
- 2 *I work for a small film company; I'm working on a nature film at the moment.*
- 3 *I really enjoy going out with my friends.*
- 4 *I don't believe in saving money.*